New Inventions: What is Truth? Memory Verse: John 14:6

April 30th, 2023 Scripture Reading: Philippians 2:5-11

**SLIDE 1: Title**

We have been doing a lot of heavy lifting in this series. We are talking about worldviews and it is such a broad topic that encompasses so many things that it forces us to dabble a little bit. Ever though we might not fancy ourselves to be theologians or scientists or philosophers, when it comes to considering our worldview, we have to a least step foot into those different spheres, because each of those areas of life and inquiry feed information into what becomes our worldview. Now, I have been arguing that the worldview we find presented in scripture is the best worldview because it is the only one that is consistent and coherent. Only in the bible do we discover a true view of reality.

**SLIDE 2: A worldview is simply a commitment to a set of assumptions one makes about reality.**

Remember what we have said in earlier weeks: A worldview is simply a commitment to a set of assumptions one makes about reality. One of those assumptions we talked about last week about the origin of our reality. Some with a naturalist worldview assume it started 14 billion years ago with a big bang. For those adhering to a biblical worldview, we see the world as a purposeful and good creation spoken into existence by the one true God. A worldview involves our brains as well as our hearts, but it also involves the idea of authority. Where, or to whom, do we look for a final say? Who gets to make decisions about the way things are? What is really true?

**SLIDE 3: Silas**

My third grader Silas had a small crisis of authority the other day while doing his math homework. He was practicing multiplying three digit numbers and of course we all know with math, you have to pay close attention to the place value of each digit. The number 23 is really two tens and three ones for example. So, Silas is there trying to explain to me how his teacher had shown him how to do the problem. And he had little rectangles drawn all over his paper and some arrows going to different boxes and numbers written in places that made no sense to me. I said, “What is all this?” And he told me that this was how his teacher had shown him how to do it. But, I could make head or tail out of the mess AND he was not arriving at the correct answer. So I said, “Forget all this, I will show you how I know how to do it.” And at first he fought me a little bit on that idea. He protested that this was the way his teacher had taught him. So Silas had a decision to make: Do you listen to the authority of your teacher, or to the authority of your father. Now normally, no question, you should hold your dad above your teachers. As a dad, I think that is a good policy. But when it comes to math, I had to admit, he was right to be a little skeptical. I asked him, “Your teacher wants you to know how to get to the correct answer right? Is it going to matter how you get there?” I said, “Let me show you my way, and then you decide what makes more sense.” So we went through it, and everything turned out all right. I went to bed that night quite pleased that I could still handle third grade math.

**SLIDE: The question of truth involves a crisis of authority.**

But don’t miss the point: Silas was torn between two authorities in his life. Which should he follow? Which should he trust? They were both good options. It wasn’t like he had a devil on one shoulder and an angel on the other. Teachers and parents are pretty much on the same team, but now there was a conflict between them. The other thing to note here is that, in math, there is one right answer. That is one of the best parts about mathematics; the certainty! Two plus two equals four, it’s something we can trust so much so that we pay engineers to use math to design and build skyscrapers and vehicles and airplanes. We quite literally put out lives into the hands of math. And as my little story points out, though there is one answer, there might be several methods of getting to that answer. But the answer is the end result we are looking for. That answer represents truth.

Finding the truth in math might prove difficult, but when the calculation is done, we can be certain if what we concluded is correct or mistaken. If it is mistaken, we can go back over our work, review the process and hopefully find where we made our misstep. This process is vastly different though when it comes to the realm of faith and worldviews. One can make a conclusion about the nature of God and go through their whole lives never knowing for sure if they have concluded rightly. And if they doubt their conclusion, they do not have a cut and dried process that they can review to look for mistakes.

**SLIDE: Our view of God and faith can be much more inclusive.**

Our view of God just sort of forms over time. Through the family we are raised in, through the culture we are surrounded by, through the peers we spend time with; views of God abound and certain things stick. But of all those voices that echo in our heads over the course of our lives, which one is hailed as the authority?

I want to take a look at a very significant conversation that is recorded in the gospel of John chapter 18. In this section, Jesus has been arrested and he is taken before Pontus Pilate, the Roman prefect who was in charge of Judea. Overall, Pilate is frustrated with the Jews. Here they were, filling the whole city with their ridiculous religious observances and now they want to bother him about some teacher who was apparently teaching the wrong things. Pilate could not have cared less, but he did care about maintaining the peace. If a riot broke out under his watch, he would have been in hot water with his higher ups. So he decides he needs to deal with this situation. READ 28. They can’t even come in to see Pilate, he has got to go out to them.

**SLIDE 4: John 18 29-32 So Pilate went out to them and asked, “What charge do you bring against this man?” They answered, “If he had done nothing wrong, we wouldn’t have handed him over to you.” Pilate responded, “Take him yourselves and judge him according to your Law.” The Jewish leaders replied, “The Law doesn’t allow us to kill anyone.” This was so that Jesus’ word might be fulfilled when he indicated how he was going to die.**

READ 29-32

Jesus mentioned earlier that he would be “lifted up” that is crucified. If the Jews were to execute someone, they would have most likely done so by stoning them. But crucifixion was a Roman specialty. From the Jewish point of view, to be lifted up, that is crucified, was to also be cursed by God. And Jesus knew that is what he was in for. And now Pilate wants to find out more, so he takes Jesus into the palace for a private grilling:

READ 33-38

**SLIDE 18: John 18:33-38 Pilate went back into the palace. He summoned Jesus and asked, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Do you say this on your own or have others spoken to you about me?” Pilate responded, “I’m not a Jew, am I? Your nation and its chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?” Jesus replied, “My kingdom doesn’t originate from this world. If it did, my guards would fight so that I wouldn’t have been arrested by the Jewish leaders. My kingdom isn’t from here.” “So you are a king?” Pilate said. Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. I was born and came into the world for this reason: to testify to the truth. Whoever accepts the truth listens to my voice.” “What is truth?” Pilate asked. After Pilate said this, he returned to the Jewish leaders and said, “I find no grounds for any charge against him.**

And there we have the question of all questions, “What is truth?” It’s an easy one to answer if we are talking about mathematics, but Pilate is not working out his multiplication tables here.

**SLIDE 6: Everyone knows that the truth is better than lies.**

Everyone knows that the truth is better than lies. If you have any doubts about that, just think back to the last time you were lied to. We know how that feels. If I was viewing this world through a false lens, if everything I believed was actually a fabrication, I would like to know. Nobody wants to be lied to and nobody wants to live life under false pretenses, but if we really want to talk about truth, we have to address the question of authority.

When we have a question, like for example; What is the origin of this universe? And two different answers come across our desk, one saying a Creator God and one saying the big bang, how do we determine which to trust? When to worldviews collide, how do we determine which one is correct? To whom do I give the authority: The cutting edge research of astrophysicist? The sounds pretty authoritative… Or an ancient religious text? That’s the question and your worldview will tell you to which answer you will arrive.

Our current culture poses a clever work around here. If you are stuck in-between a rock and hard place, if you are not too sure what to do or who to trust, just take a look in the mirror. You trust yourself right? You know what is good for you. You know what you like and don’t like. The solution here is to simply take the crown of authority and place it upon your very own head. Now as the authority you get to make the final call on what is true or not.

**SLIDE 7: Relativism: Self as Authority**

This state of affairs is called relativism. It is the notion that I have my own truth and you have yours. And if we both believe two different things, well, then that’s the way it is. Truth, objective truth cannot be known. As humans, we can only say what is true for ourselves.

This worldview, this relativism, is disastrous. Fist of all, we know at the rock-bottom core of our being that there is such a thing as truth. We still have math. We still trust math. We know that one plus one equals two; therefore it cannot be true that one plus one equal two AND three. Such an idea would destroy the very foundations of mathematics, and the same is true for our culture. If we cannot recognize that there is indeed a right answer available somewhere, then we will forever wallow in tiny seperate silos of our own making, living a lie.

It is true that God gives us freewill…we do have the capacity and actually, the responsibility to make important decisions. We choose what to eat. We choose what occupation to pursue, we choose to follow traffic laws (or not), but we also choose what it is that we believe…we do get to choose who gets the place of authority in our lives.

**SLIDE: We choose who gets the place of authority.**

I want to argue that Jesus is the only one worthy of that place. Pilate asks, “What is truth?” He wants to be accurately appraised of the situation going on between the Jewish leaders and this Jesus that stands before him. He wants insight into what his superiors are thinking about his performance as ruler of the area. He want to know what the outcome of his actions will be once the dust settles. Pilate wants to know the truth about his own life and situation…he may be less interested changing his whole worldview.

Let’s look again at the conversation: Jesus talks about how his kingdom is not of this world. Pilate retorts, “So, you are a king?” Jesus says to him, “You say that I am a king. I was born and came into the world for this reason: to testify to the truth. Whoever accepts the truth listen to my voice.”

Jesus is not talking about options here. In fact earlier in John’s gospel, after Jesus had washed his disciples feet, after Judas had stormed out from the meal to betray, he tells his disciples that he is going to glorified and he is going away to prepare a place for them. Thomas shouts out in Chapter 14 verse 6, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, how can we know the way?” And here we read what is maybe the most difficult tenant of Christianity. Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except thought me.”

**SLIDE 8: . Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except thought me.”**

There is one truth, one authority, one answer. We may come to Jesus in different ways…it could be a near-death experience, or a sermon we heard. It could be through reading the bible or from a good friend who walks with us. We might find Jesus through the influence of our parents or maybe a lighting strike sort of situation in which he reveals himself out of the blue. We might come to the answer in different ways, but we will not get to the Father without the correct answer.

Pilate looks Truth in the face and asks, “What is truth?” Those if us with a biblical worldview might ask a better question: “Who is Truth?” Jesus Christ the Son of God, our Lord and King who is the only legitimate authority. Through Him all things were created, without Him there is not even the possibility of truth.

To side with relativism and say that we get to determine what is true, is an invention. And as I said before, it is disastrous. It still tries to hold that the idea of truth is a good and important thing, but yet it buries what is true under the debris of personal opinion. And we all know what happens when you bury the Truth….Easter morning!

**SLIDE 9: “Therefore God highly honored him and gave him a name above all names,”**

I want to close with words from Philippians 2 which we read earlier in the service: “Therefore God highly honored him and gave him a name above all names,” that is authority, and He is the authority for every man, woman and child who has ever lived and will ever live. It goes on, “So that at the name of Jesus everyone in heaven, on earth and under the earth might bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Church, let us put away our relativistic tendencies. Our answer to the question, ‘What is truth?’ matters. We don’t want to miscalculate. Let us faithfully endure and stand up against the pressure to conform to our culture as we continually pursue the way, the truth and the life. Amen.